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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

This was another one of those weeks in which not much went right! Most of it pertained to the recent work we had done on the house. As you may remember, we converted our deck to a sunroom, and added a mud room off the back of the house. Naturally, we had electricity added to both rooms. I got a call Wednesday from the electrician saying that they wanted to arrange for the town's building inspector to come out to inspect the work; and that they only did such inspections twice a week, with limited hours. I arranged to have them come Thursday; I left early from work to be there so they could get into the basement. They never showed. Earlier, I had made arrangements with a friend of mine's son to do some plumbing work (set up a new water line to replace my exterior faucet now inaccessible because of the sunroom work). He had cancelled a few previous appointments - he was doing freelance for me, after his regular job - no problem. The most recent appointment was for Wednesday, around 5:00 p.m. I got a call around 6:45 - he was going to be late due to a crisis on his other job. Meanwhile, my wife was "barricaded" in her upstairs room with the dogs, so they wouldn't go bark-crazy when he arrived. He finally showed up at around 7:30 p.m. The good news is he did a great job and it was dirt cheap! The down side is that I forgot to ask him about another project we wanted done!

It's amazing to me how some small labor businesses stay afloat. I have had very bad experiences with "local" contractors making a commitment to do a job. They set an appointment or a date to do the job - and they don't show. All the time and energy to set these things up, take time off from work, and then have everything fall through. I just don't understand it. I don't know about you, but I was raised in a way that I was taught that if I made a commitment, I was to keep it. At the least, communicate if there's a problem. If people were counting on you for something, you needed to follow through. You don't see a lot of that responsibility these days.

The good news is that the plumber committed to do the job, and was determined to get it done for us even though it had to be done late into the evening. Yes, it was a little inconvenient for us, but I appreciated the effort. I brought my car in for some next-day service, and got a call later that same evening saying that the work was done. That saved me a lot of time and running around. So, I guess there are a few good services out there, but they're getting harder to find these days! Oh well, so much for my "woes of the week!"

Until next time...

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MyMAIL 1.63 E-mail Client Released

New version of MyMail (1.63) released.

Major improvements & bug fixes:
- Spam filter can now check 20 lines of the mail body
- auto-reporting improved with report-address
  lookup from abuse.net
- Added filter for the MS virus Swen
- Bug fixes of the editor

http://erikhall.atari.org/programs/mymail.html

SainT Atari ST Emulator 1.40 Released

Version 1.40 of the Windows Atari ST emulator SainT has been released.
This latest version includes several changes, including the following:

Screen is centered.
60Hz mode supported
4 cycles shift in rendering fixed
4 bytes DBcc prefetch emulated
1 pixel shift colorshock fixed
Better STE/STF detection

You can download the latest version of SainT and read the documentation at
http://leonard.oxg.free.fr/SainT/saint.html

JpegView 0.9 and PgmView 0.1 Released

This has been a long time in coming (again!), but version 0.9 of
JpegView is now available:

http://a8jdpeg.atari.org
http://a8jdpeg.webhop.org

We've now got a PGM viewer too: PgmView, available at the same place.
See 2nd half of this message for more info.

JpegView is a JPEG viewer for the Atari 8-bits, based on the C=64's
Juddpeg decoder (http://www.ffd2.com/fridge/) written by Stephen L.
Judd.

The following changes have been made to JpegView:
* Improved graphics mode selection menu
* Improved support for large images, images up to 1280x800 will be

  reduced to fit the available screen size
* Dithering added to all modes
* Improved GR.8 flicker mode
* Added horizontal divide by 4 capability
* Images are automatically adjusted so they no longer look stretched
  in certain modes
* Assorted bug fixes and improvements

It may not seem like it, but there's a lot of new code in this version, so there's probably some new bugs too. Please try this and let me know if you have any problems.

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There's also a PGM viewer now: PgmView

Decoding a PGM image is a lot quicker than a JPEG, but PGMs use more disk space. Both a8jdpeg and JpegView will convert JPEGs to PGM, which can then be viewed with PgmView. This is useful if:

* You want to view an image repeatedly (maybe in several display
  modes), especially if you've got a big enough ramdisk.
* You've got a 48K machine and want to view images in HIP and the
  other 64K modes (PgmView will never use more than 48K)
* You don't care about disk space

If you want to view the same image more than once, then you can convert it to PGM first and then view it with PgmView. This will work even better if you've got a big enough ramdisk or a fast disk drive.

PgmView can use all display modes in 48K. People with 48K machines can now view images in modes that need a 64K machine with JpegView. Use JpegView/a8jdpeg to convert the images to PGM and then PgmView to view the images in HIP and other flicker modes that needed 64K.

PgmView also provides another way of transferring images from a PC to the Atari. You can easily convert from just about any image format out there to PGM using the freely available Netpbm toolkit (http://download.sourceforge.net/netpbm/), transfer them to the Atari, and use PgmView to view them and convert them to Micropainter and HIP formats.

As usual, comments, suggestions, bug reports, feedback, etc. are welcome.

Next up: A colour version of the JPEG viewer.

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-- Raphael Espino - rjespino@yahoo.com - Ramdrive and JPEG viewers --
--   http://rjespino.atari.org   or   http://rjespino.webhop.org   --
------------- Join The Atari 8-bit Computer WebRing at: -------------
---------- http://www.geocities.com/rjespino/a8ring.html -----------

MIDI Maze Cartridge Released

Mark DiLuciano of Sunmark has announced the immediate availability in cartridge form of the unreleased Atari 8-bit game MIDI Maze. MIDI Maze is

a multi-player game originally written for the Atari ST and later ported (but never released) for the Atari 8-bit computers. Up to 16 computers can be linked together for play, and Atari 8-bit machines can even be networked together with Atari ST computers using a MIDI Mate interface. The first 50 people to buy a MIDI Maze cartridge will also receive the unreleased prototype Mean 18. You can purchase the game (and view some screenshots) at http://www.sunmark.com

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and winter is getting closer. Mother Nature is messing with us again. Sure, we've had a few days that could qualify for autumn, but mostly I think we'll just be going from summer to 'indian summer' to winter.

We've had our first frost already... that's not unusual 'round here. What IS unusual is having had snow this early in the year. And that's what we've had already... snow! It wasn't even enough to cover the road, and it was gone in no time, but it's just the shock-factor.

On another subject, we've successfully moved just about everything to do with A-ONE to the new server now, with the notable exception of the mailing list. We're working on that now, and should have it all fixed up shortly.

The last thing I want to mention is that I set up a mailing list for a friend recently. Now, you can think of an email list as a home-grown version of Yahoo! Groups. The difference is that my email lists don't come with annoying popup ads or inline commercials for a bunch of crap that you care nothing about. An email list is an incredibly helpful tool for a group of people who want to communicate. And even though it's not really rocket science it gives me a good feeling to know that I've made someone's life a little easier or a little more enjoyable for a while.

I've always been of the opinion that computers (and technology in general) should give us more choices, not less. I don't have a problem with people having a dozen different ways of getting email. I'd have a problem with it if all 12 of those ways ended up on Microsoft's (or anyone else's, for that matter) doorstep. That means FEWER choices, and that's not what technology is supposed to be about.

When you get right down to it, technology should be a way to help you do what you want to do more easily. If I can help a few people here and there to do what they want to do more easily, I'll be happy.

Now let's get to the news and stuff from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Kenneth Medin asks about getting Aniplayer to act as a plug-in for CAB:

"I can’t get Aniplayer to act as a plug-in in CAB and for example display the examples at the Aniplayer homepage http://perso.wanadoo.fr/didierm/ . I know this did work in the past but now something is wrong.

CAB actually downloads one of the .mov files but Aniplayer does not seem to care.

Setup is latest versions of Magic, Jinnee, CAB, Olga and I can’t find anything wrong with how things are setup. After all it is not too complicated to setup MAGIC.INF and OLGA.INF correctly for this use. I have setup Aniplayer as "help program" within CAB. OLGA.APP is up and running.

Is this working for someone else with a similar setup?"

Edward Baiz tells Kenneth:

"I have a similar setup on my Hades060. I use Magic mainly with Jinnee 2.5 and Cab. When I download a file with the extension I have chosen for Aniplay (wav,mov,etc) under Cab, Aniplayer is brought up and the file is played (or at least Aniplayer tries to play it)."

Carey Christenson tells Kenneth:

"Inside of CAB, under OPTIONS and EXTERNAL VIEWERS.
Did you setup .MOV to be recognized by ANIPLAYER???
You must tell CAB the EXACT directory that ANIPLAYER program resides and have CHECKMARKED SUPPORTS VA START for Aniplayer to be used and recognized by CAB.
Notice also under EXTERNAL VIEWERS that there are MANY other file formats that can be defined to have specific programs that you want used to deal with certain file extenders. Let me know if this helps there maybe a setup issue with Jinnee that may need dealt with as well."

Edward adds:

"Yes, I forgot to mention this. You must do as Carey says or else Aniplayer will do nothing. The same would go if you wanted certain picture files to be loaded also."

’Rob’ asks about the venerable MegaST:

"Just got hold of a mega st 1, though I don’t have anything to view it on yet, I’ll get/make an adapter for it, until then though, a couple of questions....

It has a battery compartment, what’s it for (no manual)

On the bottom sticker, it says mega st1 NT   (what’s the NT for... I

saw a mega ste on ebay that was advertised with the nt monicker also)

Are they easily upgradeable memory of hard drive wise, I realise you plug megafile in the back of it, but these aren't that common in the UK, and those that are, cost a bomb (which I'd prefer not to pay), if there is an easier way of getting even a tiny hard drive working, that would be great.

Finally, I see it has an expansion slot in the back, I know you can put a pc emulator card in it, what else can go in it (just curious)."

Mark Bedingfield tells Rob:

"[The battery compartment is for a] Real time clock,

You could get an Adscsi controller to fit in the drive internally, bit I never actually saw one. You are pretty much right, megafile or an external scsi drive and host adaptor. You could fit an internal IDE drive using mario becroft's adaptor http://gem.win.co.nz/mb/atarihw/ide.html or If you are clever enough http://www.joogn.de/atari_ide.html. Ram upgrades are a problem but you can go to 4 meg using the extra ram deluxe board that uses standard simms, the trick is finding one, or again http://atari.nvg.org/stacyram/index.html. Not all of these hacks are for the MegaST, but are easily adapted."

Rob replies:

"Thanks for the info Mark, I pulled the batteries out coz they looked like they were about to leak...ah well, I'm sure it's not too difficult resetting the clock.

I have contacted mario before (vme graphics card - galaxy) but got no reply, so unless someone else sells the hardware, I'm a bit stuck. (The adapter would do just the trick too have a nice 500mb drive that would go in there... I'm not brave enough to attempt the DIY version)."

Always of good humor, John Garone tells Rob:

"My batteries have been in my Mega4 since 1987. I'm afraid to look but I'm sure they've stopped leaking by now!!!"

'Emilio' asks about reading Atari floppies on a PC:

"I hope this is the right place to ask.
(I wasn't able to find FAQs about AtariST)

I have my old ST floppies which I cannot read anymore
(mostly source code).
I'm looking for a way to read them using a Win2k PC."

Maurits van de Kamp tells Emilio:

"Download GEMExplorer from http://tamw.atari-users.net/download.htm "

Emilio follows the link and replies:

"Gemexplorer doesn’t work on Win2k...
but I got it running on a Win98 box ! Nice."

Kenneth Medin jumps in and adds:

"But Gemulator itself does. I use it a lot at work to run a (sort of) company critical Atari app.

Should be set to "Atari disk mode" for best compatibility.

In the Windows world you often need a multiboot setup for some programs that can’t cope with some Win incarnation.

Nice to be on a platform where often the same physical applications can be run in TOS, Magic, Geneva, Mint without multiple separate installations..."

John Garone asks about a problem he has with CAB on occasion:

"Is this a CAB bug or something else? This happens but rarely:
(note that this is a Falcon with single TOS 4.04)
It looks to me like RAM (14 meg) is getting filled but there’s not that many bytes downloaded. This is not the usual "run time error offset" crash. With this, a page gets loaded but CAB stops loading pics even though CAB Cache shows plenty of RAM left and I know there should be at least 8 meg RAM free. There’s also plenty of hard drive space. It can happen on the first or second web page downloaded. I can call up the control panel but can’t open General.cpx to see RAM status! Then when I close CAB there’s 0 bytes in the Hotlist file!

Another odd but possibly related problem happened when trying to get Sting to connect (I usually use Stik2). After playing around with scripts, etc., my Control.inf on drive C got reduced to 0 bytes so had to boot from a floppy until I found the error."

Kenneth Medin tells John that he’s...

"Never seen this with CAB 2.8 and Magic 6.20 and I use CAB quite often.

You are using Newsie and in the past there have been several file corruption reports by Newsie users. I seem to recall it can be cured by turning off some logging functions. Sorry, I don’t use Newsie myself."

John tells Kenneth:

"I keep Newsie in it’s own folder which seems to keep file corruption within the folder (actually adds merged corrupted files which Diamond Edge takes care of fairly well....((if no long file names)). The problem I was speaking of seems to be related to CAB, the CAB_JPEG module or CAB calling on the JPEG loader in the AUTO folder (just guessing) and it is a rare occurrence but annoying none the less."

Well folks, that’s it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - ’Half-Life II" Release Uncertain!
Game Maker’s Not Going Soft!
Tourney Headed for Vegas!

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Vivendi ’Half-Life 2’ Game Release Date Uncertain

With online retailers beginning to speculate that "Half-Life 2," one of the most anticipated PC games ever, could ship as soon as mid-November, the game’s developer is still not saying whether it will be out this year at all.

After weeks of uncertainty over when the game would be released - compounded by a missed launch date and a hacker attack on the game’s development company - online game retailers have begun showing a post-Thanksgiving ship date.

Yet the game’s publisher, Vivendi Universal Games, referred questions this week to developer Valve Software, and a Valve spokesman said only "nothing yet," when asked Wednesday if the company had any update on when it would release the title.

Amazon.com Inc. shows the game being released Dec. 1, while EBGames.com says the game will ship on Nov. 27. Wal-Mart Stores Inc.’s Walmart.com says for people who pre-order the game "it should arrive on or just after" Nov. 17. Best Buy Inc.’s BestBuy.com estimates the game arriving between Nov. 3 and Nov. 12.

However, GameStop Corp.’s GameStop.com still shows an April 1, 2004 release, and a spokeswoman for Amazon, which is generally considered to be on top of industry release schedules, said the company was merely guessing at that Dec. 1 date based on comments by the game’s developer, Valve, that it would be out this holiday season.

"Half-Life 2," the sequel to one of the best-selling video games ever, is considered so important to the industry that its assumed delay into 2004, combined with the delay until next year of the equally-important "Doom

III," has prompted analysts to lower their PC games growth forecasts for this year.

"HL2" is also seen as key to hardware companies like PC graphics chip makers ATI Technologies Inc. and Nvidia Corp., who count on video game players to consistently buy the newest, fastest and most-expensive chips to play intensive games like "HL2."

The game had been set for a Sept. 30 release; but the week before, Valve said the game would not launch on schedule but would instead be out at some unspecified point this holiday season.

Subsequently, Valve said some of the game's code was stolen by hackers that infiltrated the company's e-mail systems. Bits of that code appeared on the Internet, as did what some fans said in online forums were playable portions of the game.

Valve has said only that it is assessing the impact of the theft on the game and its schedule. But a senior executive of Vivendi Universal Games, a unit of France's Vivendi Universal, said in an interview with a French newspaper earlier this month that the game would not come out until April 2004 because of the stolen code.

A source familiar with Vivendi Universal Games' operations said at the time, however, that it was unclear when the game would be ready for release and no one was certain of that April forecast.

The original "Half-Life," released in 1998, is still popular among PC gamers, and a modified version of the game, called "Counter-Strike," is widely used in gaming competitions.

"Half-Life 2" stars Gordon Freeman, a scientist battling aliens from the planet Xen in a mysterious European locale known only as City 17.

Fear Not, Hardcore Violence Fans: Game Maker's Not Going Soft

Video game maker Take-Two Interactive Software Inc. looks to broaden its offerings beyond the gritty, violent crime adventures for which it's best known.

The New York-based company behind the mature-themed "Grand Theft Auto" series of games is in the process of buying TDK Mediactive Inc., a small game publisher with a host of kid-friendly licensed properties.

TDK's portfolio includes games based on movies, TV shows and popular culture, such as "Shrek," "Pirates of the Caribbean," The Muppets and Tonka toys.

But make no mistake. Bloody shoot-em-ups and other racy fare for adults will continue to be Take Two's bread and butter, says Chief Executive Jeffrey Lapin.

"The company is not changing direction," he said. "We've carved out a niche of the big, edgy, innovative games and we've been very successful at it."

With the TDK acquisition, Take-Two looks to balance out its game portfolio

and become a bigger, broader player in the market, says analyst P.J. McNealy of American Technology Research.

Two years ago, Take-Two got more than 30% of its sales from its "Grand Theft Auto" franchise.

"They are trying to move away from being so dependent on ’Grand Theft Auto,’ " McNealy said.

Take-Two also eyes a wider spectrum of game tastes with the TDK buy, says analyst Michael Pachter of Wedbush Morgan Securities.

About 75% of its games are M-rated for mature content, he says. That compares with industry-wide figures of 20% M-rated games and 80% rated for teens or everyone.

Take-Two looks to benefit from an expected increase in sales of children’s and family games. That category usually gets a boost when the current generation of hardware nears the end of its run. The reason: prices of video game consoles fall.

The three consoles - Sony Corp.’s PlayStation 2, Microsoft Corp.’s Xbox and Nintendo Co.’s GameCube - all have seen recent price cuts.

"If there was an optimal time to get into the licensed mass-market games, this would be it - in the last three years of the cycle," Lapin said. "If it all works well, we could look very smart."

Still, Take-Two - which expects to complete its $22.7 million purchase of TDK the first week of November -faces some challenges turning the acquired firm around.

Based in Westlake Village, Calif., TDK is unprofitable and its games aren’t so hot, analysts say. For the year ended March 31, it lost $8.3 million on sales of $42.2 million.

But Lapin says Take-Two’s product development and marketing capabilities will give TDK’s games a helping hand.

Take-Two also will expand distribution of TDK’s products through its Jack of All Games division, which is the largest distributor of console games in the U.S.

The unit distributes games for Take-Two and other firms to retailers such as Best Buy Co., Wal-Mart Stores Inc. and Target Corp.

Last quarter, Jack of All Games accounted for 40% of Take-Two’s revenue.

Meanwhile, the holiday shopping season is shaping up well for Take-Two, judging from advance orders, Lapin says.

The company’s biggest new games this fall are "Max Payne 2," sequel to the original film-noir action thriller; and "Manhunt," a survival game with horror elements. Rockstar Games, the Take-Two unit responsible for the "Grand Theft Auto" series, developed both titles.

Take-Two also is releasing "Grand Theft Auto 3" and "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City" as a combo pack for PlayStation 2 and, for the first time, Xbox. And it’ll release its PC game "Mafia" for those consoles.

"’Max Payne 2’ has the highest likelihood of being a really big seller," Pachter said. " ’Mafia’ will be a good, solid seller. ’Manhunt’ is much more speculative."

Next year, Take-Two will release "The Warriors," a game based on the 1979 gang movie, in the spring. It’ll also release the fifth edition of the "Grand Theft Auto" series in time for the 2004 holiday season.

The key for Take-Two is developing new franchises beyond its current core, analysts say.

The company aims to get 75% of its sales from existing franchises and 25% from new titles, analyst McNealy says.

Just don’t expect a lot of new product flooding the market, says Wedbush’s Pachter.

"What we should expect is that each year they will layer in one or two new franchises that have the ability to generate sequels," he said. "Let’s hope they’re successful with one a year. That would be great. They’ll just keep building their portfolio."

He disagrees with the notion that the mass market will want more inoffensive family games as consoles get into more homes.

"The truth is, 14-year-old boys like ultraviolent games," Pachter said. "Clearly we’ve got a migration of taste toward more violent, more sexually charged, more sophisticated, more dramatic, more action-oriented games."

Major Video Games Tournament Heading to Las Vegas

Video gaming’s richest tournament has decided to move to Las Vegas and set up show alongside one of the world’s largest consumer electronics shows - and it’s adding a women’s category too.

Cyber X Gaming, operator of an international video game tournament, on Thursday said it has moved its grand finals to Las Vegas from Orlando to coincide with next year’s Consumer Electronics Show.

Cyber X said the winning team at the "ATI/AMD Cyber X Games Championships" would take home $100,000, competing in the game "Counter Strike." It said it would also sponsor a tournament on the game "Quake 3" for female players only.

CES is one of the biggest conventions held annually in the United States, drawing more than 110,000 people to Las Vegas and generating more than $80 million in non-gambling revenue alone, according to event sponsor the Consumer Electronics Association.

The competition will occupy 42,000 square feet at the Stardust Pavilion and another 10,000 square feet co-located with CES at the Las Vegas Convention Center.

Cyber X Gaming said attendees at its competitions would also get passes to get them into CES, which is expected to occupy more than 1.3 million square feet of exhibition space.

Chip designers Advanced Micro Devices Inc. and ATI Technologies Inc. are the presenting sponsors of the games event.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

U.S., Microsoft Fight Over Online Music

Nearly a year after Microsoft Corp. agreed to end its anticompetitive conduct, the government is raising concerns the world's largest software maker is trying to use its dominant Windows operating system to influence where customers buy their music online.

If the dispute isn't resolved by week's end, it could become the first test of Microsoft's landmark antitrust settlement that was approved by a federal court in October 2002.

Lawyers for the Justice Department and 19 state attorneys general have formally complained to a federal judge about a design feature of Windows that compels consumers who buy music online to use only Microsoft's Internet browser and steers them to a Web site operated by the company.

Microsoft's design "may be inconsistent" with the settlement, government lawyers wrote in court papers asking U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly to intervene if the problems aren't resolved.

The company said Monday it is willing to work with the government but does not believe the design is illegal. Online music purchases are expected to be one of the most-lucrative areas for Internet commerce.

"We believe that the use of Internet Explorer by the Shop-for-Music-Online link in Windows is consistent with the design rules established by the consent decree, and we will continue to work with the government to address any concerns," spokeswoman Stacy Drake said.

The dispute already has risen to the level of a three-member technical committee of experts established by the judge to help oversee the antitrust settlement.

Those experts are Harry Saal, founder of the company that became Network Associates Inc.; Franklin Fite Jr., a former Microsoft employee, and Skip Stritter, former director of business development for wireless products at Cisco Systems Inc. Saal referred questions about the latest dispute to the Justice Department.

The fight over online music sales was disclosed in documents filed last week with the judge and made available by the court Monday.

The dispute centers on a design feature in Windows XP called "Shop for Music Online," which lets consumers purchase compact discs from retailers

over the Internet. When consumers click the link to buy music, Windows opens Microsoft’s browser software even after consumers specify that they prefer using rival browser software.

The link - prominent whenever a computer user opens a designated folder containing songs - also steers Windows users to a Web site, windowsmedia.com, operated by Microsoft with links to online retailers, such as Buy.com or CDNow. On Monday, the page promoted CDs by Madonna, 50 Cent, Linkin Park and Celine Dion.

The Windows behavior does not affect consumers who use another Internet browser to directly visit other music sellers, such as Apple Computer Inc.’s new iTunes site or the Rhapsody service from Listen.com.

The dispute affects one of the central tenets of the antitrust settlement: improving the ability of rival software vendors to compete against Microsoft’s own programs running on Windows. One settlement provision allows Microsoft’s own programs to launch only if rival software "fails to implement a reasonable technical requirement."

The long-running antitrust case accused Microsoft of abusing its Windows monopoly to crush software companies whose products could weaken demand for the Windows operating system.

Internet Tax Ban Could Drain State Coffers, Group Says

State and local governments could lose $2 billion to $9 billion per year in tax revenue if Congress strengthens an existing ban on Internet access taxes, a policy group said on Monday.

Cash-strapped states could lose revenue from telephone service, music and movie sales, and other activities that could migrate to the Internet over the next several years if the Senate passes a tax ban that has already cleared the House of Representatives, said the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a think tank which represents lower-income families.

Most taxes on monthly fees charged by Internet service providers like EarthLink Inc. are already prohibited by a temporary ban due to expire Nov. 1.

The House passed a bill last month that would make the ban permanent and extend it to cover the high-speed Internet access that is currently taxed in 27 states and the District of Columbia. The bill would also require nine states to repeal existing access taxes that had been "grandfathered" in the previous ban.

The Senate could vote on a similar measure as soon as this week, several aides said.

Supporters of the strengthened ban say it will create a consistent national policy that would encourage as many people to sign up for the more expensive broadband service, but Michael Mazerov, a senior policy analyst at CBPP, said those who could afford the $40 to $50 monthly broadband fee would not be put off by a few extra dollars in tax.

"This is really a subsidy for those who don’t need it," Mazerov said.

States could lose $70 million in tax revenue annually from the broadband-tax ban, he said, while the elimination of the "grandfather clause" could drain an additional $80 million to $120 million each year from state coffers.

But a much larger impact could come over the next few years, as citizens increasingly use the Internet to place phone calls and download music, movies and software, he said. Language in the bill could render these activities tax-free if they are bundled with access fees, he said.

A spokeswoman for Oregon Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden, a major backer of the bill, said the taxable status of Internet-based phone calls or other online activities would not be affected.

"A phone call is a phone call is a phone call," Wyden spokeswoman Carol Guthrie said.

"States and localities have said for years and years since the inception of this ban that Western Civilization would end at its passage, but five years of solid math and evidence show that this law works for the American people," Guthrie added.

Senate Votes 97-0 To Restrict E-Mail Ads

The Senate approved the nation’s first federal anti-spam legislation last night after reaching a compromise that also opens the door to a national no-spam registry similar to the do-not-call list for telemarketers.

The bill, sponsored by Sens. Conrad Burns (R-Mont.) and Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), was approved 97 to 0. It targets the most unsavory senders of unsolicited commercial e-mail by prohibiting messages that peddle financial scams, fraudulent body-enhancement products and pornography.

The legislation also draws on amendments from Sens. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) and Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah) that would criminalize the techniques used by spammers to thwart detection - disguising identities, masking the locations of computers used to send junk e-mail and automating spam attacks.

The action comes as spam’s stranglehold on e-mail communication is growing. By some estimates, spam now accounts for 60 percent of all e-mail traffic and is costing businesses and consumers roughly $10 billion per year.

In a poll released yesterday by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 25 percent of respondents said that spam is causing them to curtail their use of e-mail.

The Burns-Wyden bill has been supported by the marketing, retailing and Internet-access industries, which argue that a federal law should be written carefully to avoid inhibiting legitimate marketers from sending e-mail advertising that consumers may want.

But several anti-spam and consumer groups have argued that the bill has too many loopholes that could enable so-called legitimate marketers to bombard consumers with unwanted e-mail.

The bill would preempt all state anti-spam laws, some of which are tougher

than the Burns-Wyden bill. And it would prohibit private lawsuits against spammers, allowing suits only by providers of e-mail accounts, such as Yahoo Inc., Microsoft Corp., EarthLink Inc. and America Online Inc., all of which also market to their own members.

But after months of negotiations, the bill now includes a provision, supported by some opponents of spam, that directs the Federal Trade Commission to come up with a plan for a no-spam registry.

The registry, proposed by Sen. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) and supported by a range of groups including the Christian Coalition of America and the Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial Email, would be similar to the FTC's do-not-call list, which prohibits telemarketers from calling any phone number that consumers place on the list.

The direct-marketing industry won a preliminary court challenge to the list, but the FTC is enforcing it pending an appeal. In the meantime, the list has been wildly popular, attracting more than 50 million numbers.

To date, however, FTC Chairman Timothy J. Muris has opposed a no-spam registry, arguing that it would be unenforceable because spammers would ignore it and that it would be hard to keep the e-mail addresses secure.

Supporters of a registry say it would at least control many ostensibly legitimate marketers that fail to honor consumer requests to be free of unwanted mail.

Schumer's plan also allows for entire e-mail domains to be put on the list, so that marketers could be prevented from sending any unwanted commercial mail to employees at a certain domain - say, washingtonpost.com.

The bill stops short of mandating the registry, instead directing the FTC to develop a registry system within six months and to document technical hurdles.

An FTC official said last night that the agency's position on a registry has not changed and that even if a workable system could be devised, the bill does not provide for the substantial additional resources that would be required to implement it.

The official said that to protect the e-mail addresses on the list, marketers would have to submit their databases to the agency, which would then scrub them of names on the registry and return them.

"If we were to continue to believe it wouldn't work, Congress would have to change the law" to force the FTC to institute the registry, the official said.

But Schumer said that he is confident "this is a now a downhill road, as opposed to an uphill road" to getting a registry, and that the odds are high that one will be in place in a year.

The White House issued a statement yesterday supporting passage of the Burns-Wyden bill, though it did not address the registry question.

Yahoo and Microsoft, two of the largest Internet service providers, also endorsed the bill yesterday, although they have opposed the registry notion. The Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial Email, which had criticized the bill as being weak, also gave tentative support.

A similar bill in the House - though without a registry provision - is still at the House Energy and Commerce Committee, where several legislators want its language strengthened.

Committee Chairman W.J. "Billy" Tauzin (R.-La.) and Judiciary Committee Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner Jr. (R-Wis.), two of the House bill's sponsors, were embarrassed by revelations over the summer that their staffs had been working closely with the marketing and retailing industries in crafting the original version of the bill.

Some provisions have been changed, but not enough to break the logjam, said one committee staff member. Differences between a House bill and the Senate version would have to be reconciled in conference committee.

Many in the business community are particularly anxious for a federal law because they want it to supersede existing state laws that they consider draconian.

In a memo sent out Tuesday to industry organizations, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said that a new California law set to take effect Jan. 1 would hurt "almost every type of business across the country."

The law, authored by California state Sen. Kevin Murray (D-Los Angeles), prohibits all unsolicited commercial e-mail unless consumers have first given their permission to receive it, a system known as "opt-in" and supported by consumer groups.

The congressional bills are "opt-out," meaning that companies can send e-mail but must honor consumers' requests to be free of future mailings.

Joseph Rubin, the chamber's executive director of technology and e-commerce, said many of his members fear that their marketing lists would not qualify as opt-in under the terms of the California law.

Many marketers also argue that one federal law will be easier to enforce than a patchwork of state regulations.

"It sort of boggles the mind," responded Murray, who said that no major corporation opposed his bill. "They have a rational interest in uniformity of laws, but why not do the law that is the strongest?"

California Wins Its First Anti-Spam Judgment

California won its first anti-spam judgment on Friday when a court fined a marketing firm $2 million for sending out millions of unsolicited e-mails telling people how to spam, the state's attorney general said.

Attorney General Bill Lockyer brought the case against PW Marketing of Los Angeles County and its owners Paul Willis and Claudia Griffin in 2002 under a 1998 state anti-spam law. The law was strengthened last month to make it easier to sue spammers.

Lockyer's spokesman Tom Dressler said while this case was decided under the original statute, the attorney general's office expects in the future it will be easier to try cases under the updated, tougher law.

PW Marketing and Willis and Griffin were charged with sending out millions

of e-mails advertising "how to" guides on spamming and long lists of e-mail addresses.

The judgment, which Lockyer said will be the model for future spam injunctions, forbids PW Marketing from sending unsolicited commercial e-mail, accessing computers that belong to other people without their permission and disguising its identity by sending e-mails that appear to originate from a different address.

The injunction also forbids Willis and Griffin for 10 years from owning or managing any business that advertises over the Internet.

The tougher measures in the new statute include allowing individuals to sue spammers and collect damages of up to $1,000 per e-mail. Another provision forbids sending unsolicited e-mail advertisements unless recipients give prior permission to receive such e-mails.

The old law made it illegal to send to recipients who had specified they did not want to receive e-mail advertising. It also required senders to provide a phone number or valid e-mail address for opting out on each e-mail - something the company did not do, the attorney general’s office said.

AOL Quietly Combats Pop-Up Spam Messages

Even more annoying than junk e-mail are all the spam messages that "pop up" through a little-used feature in Windows. As part of its spam-fighting efforts, America Online has been turning off that feature for its customers without telling them.

AOL spokesman Andrew Weinstein said the feedback has been all positive, and he knows of no complaints to AOL call centers about side effects on other applications that may need that feature.

Nonetheless, AOL’s action worries some security experts who were told about it by The Associated Press.

"They are trying to do the right thing ... but you sort of feel dirty after you hear it," said Bruce Schneier, chief technology officer for Counterpane Internet Security Inc. "It’s a very dangerous precedent in having companies go into your computer and turn things on and off."

"From there," he added, "it’s easy to turn off competitors’ services."

Pop-up spam differs from pop-up ads in that no Web browser or Web site visit is required. Instead, these ads take advantage of a messaging function built into many Windows operating systems.

The function, generally enabled automatically when computers are shipped, was designed for computer network technicians to, for instance, warn people on their systems of a planned shutdown. Some applications also notify users of such actions as a network printer finishing a task.

About a year ago, spammers figured out that they, too, could exploit it, making ads automatically appear on users’ screens at any time.

AOL - along with other Internet service providers and makers of security

firewall products - responded by closing many of the Internet ports used, but closing all could disrupt other applications.

AOL then developed a tool that users could run to turn off the feature entirely, but few bothered, even though complaints about such messages kept growing, Weinstein said.

So two weeks ago, AOL began turning the feature off on customers' behalf, using a self-updating mechanism in AOL's software. But the setting changed is on Windows, not AOL's software. Users are not notified of the change, though they may manually turn the feature back on, and AOL won't change it again.

Weinstein said the company has changed settings for 15 million users already and will continue doing so over the next few weeks.

"Almost none of the users will ever need this functionality," he said. "Even in the office environment, it is rarely used."

Furthermore, he said, AOL won't change settings unless the user has administrative privileges on that computer - something employees generally don't have on their work machines.

Weinstein notes that besides blocking pop-up spam, it closes a Windows vulnerability that Microsoft Corp. deems critical and disclosed last week.

Matt Pilla, a Windows product manager at Microsoft, said in a statement that while software vendors are free to make such changes, they should tell users first.

Lawrence Baldwin, president of the security Web site myNetWatchman.com, said that while AOL should be lauded for taking responsibility for ensuring computer security, "I certainly wouldn't want my ISP (Internet service provider) messing with my system."

For software to change computer settings on its own isn't unprecedented. Software from other vendors, for instance, can automatically make itself the main application for playing music files or surfing the Web. Any warnings are often hard to find.

Russ Cooper, a security expert with TruSecure Corp., said anyone who needs the Windows messaging function that AOL disabled ought to be smart enough to know how to reactivate it.

"I hope more and more providers do this type of proactive security," he said, "and that we don't condemn them for things we wish everybody would do for themselves."

Laws Alone Can't Save the Online Children

While Congress has made efforts to protect children on the Internet, such as the passage of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), which requires verifiable parental consent before personally identifiable information can be collected from children online, parents should not sit back and assume that the law alone will safeguard their children from cyber perils. Rather, parents need to be vigilant in teaching their children well what to do and not do on the Internet.

According to Johsua Finer, President of Software4Parents.com, while most parents are concerned about their children viewing pornography on the Web, there is a much greater danger the danger of absolute strangers contacting their children for highly improper purposes.

Thus, Mr. Finer points to statistics that show that while one out of four children may have seen naked people and people having sex on the Internet, worse still, one out of five children have been sexually solicited online. Indeed, in May, 2002, a child's death was attributed to someone who contacted the child on the Internet.

While parents generally urge their children not to talk to strangers, Mr. Finer points out that due to the anonymity of the Internet, children "talk" to strangers frequently when they are online. What is a parent to do?

Mr. Finer suggests the following safety tips for parents:

Instruct your child never to reveal personally identifiable information, such as name, address, and phone number on the Internet.

Communicate often with your child about activities you permit and do not permit online, and especially with whom your child can communicate online.

Locate computers in public places in your home so that Internet usage by your child can be observed.

Make sure that your child's screen name, email address and instant message name do not reveal information such as gender, age, hobbies or anything that is related to your child.

Use technology for protection, as discussed below.

Mr. Finer believes that technology can help parents protect their children from Internet dangers.

For example, monitoring software allows a parent to actually review of child's Internet usage. While some people might feel that this violates a child's trust and privacy, others believe that it is better to keep children safe than to insulate their electronic activities. Mr. Finer recommends Spector PRO as the first choice for monitoring software.

Filtering software also can be used to block inappropriate Web sites containing pornography, violence and other distasteful content. Of course, this blocking software is not perfect, as it can at times inadvertently block decent content or fail to block inappropriate content. Mr. Finer's first choice when it comes to filtering software is Cyber Sentinel.

We truly have entered the brave new world of the Internet, and as we proceed, let's work together to watch, guide and save the online children.

Web Firm Loses $4.3M Case to 3 Brothers

Three young brothers were awarded $4.3 million - and stand to win more in punitive damages - after accusing X10 Wireless Technology of trying to bully them out of business.

But the brothers, who founded their company when the youngest of them was still in his teens, say the case is about the cutthroat nature of Internet business, not about money.

"This lawsuit was about fairness, not about making us rich," said Chris Vanderhook, who created an Internet advertising business with his brothers in 1999.

Two weeks ago, a Superior Court jury in Santa Ana ordered X10, a Seattle-based technology company, to pay $4.3 million in compensatory damages to the Vanderhooks. Deliberations on punitive damages start Wednesday.

The brothers Russell, 26; Chris, 25; and Tim, 22 claimed that X10 failed to pay $564,000 in commissions and stole their proprietary technology and business model.

X10 attorney Sean P. O'Connor declined to comment or say whether the company planned to appeal.

"It would be inappropriate for either counsel to discuss this matter until the jury has completed its deliberations," he said.

The Vanderhooks created Advertisement Banners.com from their parents' Yorba Linda home. It was one of the few companies to use "pop-under" technology that allows advertisers to place their product pitches underneath computer Web sites so that a person sees the ads after they close their browser rather than being confronted by the more annoying "pop-up" announcements while they're looking at something else.

One of their first big clients was X10, whose security-camera ads soon began appearing all over the Internet.

"When we found out they weren't paying that bill, we were beyond distraught," recalled Chris Vanderhook.

"These were young guys who had a dream to start a successful company, but X10 looked at their youth and thought they could wipe them out," said Michael Fitzgerald, a lawyer for the Vanderhooks.

Yahoo Launches Anti-Spam E-Mail Decoys

Yahoo Inc., the Internet media and services company, on Tuesday launched a new set of premium e-mail features that lets users create hundreds of decoy addresses to thwart spam mail.

Yahoo, which has marketed itself as a successful spam fighter for e-mail users, said most of the new functions are available only to subscribers of its Mail Plus service, which costs $29.99 a year.

The battle against spam has drawn the attention of e-mail providers and legislators, amid growing concern about the cost of junk e-mail to companies and consumers.

Yahoo said it has seen a 40 percent jump in spam from January to August and now averages 700,000 spam reports a day. Some analysts estimate that spam totals one-third of all e-mail, costing corporations billions of dollars a

year.

Yahoo said its new AddressGuard feature would let users create a fictitious "base name" and then 500 variations on that name that they could give out when shopping, banking and joining communities online.

If an address started to receive spam, the user could simply shut down the address and use another one.

SpamGuard Plus, which like AddressGuard is available only to premium subscribers, lets customers set individual rules to define spam and continue to use a blanket filter to block all spam.

Another new feature available to all users allows for a message display limited to e-mails from known users. Some users will start to have that function next week, Yahoo said, though it will not be fully launched systemwide until November.

Yahoo has also changed rules on viruses, forcing users to scan all attachments for viruses before downloading. Such scans had been optional.

Brad Garlinghouse, vice president of communications products at Yahoo, told Reuters the company had to keep enhancing its software because the legal battle against spam could not do the job alone.

"Legislation and litigation, it’s something of a whack-a-mole problem," he said, a reference to a popular arcade game that challenges players to try to hit an increasingly fast array of pop-up figures, though he added Yahoo has supported spam laws and used anti-spam suits in past.

Yahoo said its marketing research highlights the extent to which spam is despised. In an August survey of Yahoo users, 77 percent said they would rather clean a toilet than sort through the junk e-mail in their inbox.

Outsmart Scammers

Always be suspicious of e-mail asking for personal information. When in doubt, contact the company directly to confirm the correspondence and find out whether the e-mail or Web site link is legit. Report violators to your ISP and the Federal Trade Commission.

Not only can spam annoy you, but now it can also be used to steal your identity and rip you off.

Got a message from a retailer or financial services firm, asking you to confirm your e-mail or physical address, password, and more? Be wary: It’s probably a "phishing" lure. Spammers are increasingly using this technique to con you into handing over personal information.

This class of junk e-mail routes its victims to Web sites that mimic those of legitimate companies like Best Buy, EBay, and Citigroup. Fraudsters operating the fake Web sites ask to "confirm" personal and account information - and then they rip you off.

Junk e-mail filters can’t always identify these bogus pitches, primarily because the crooks create e-mail and sites that look very convincing.

But businesses and law enforcement agencies are fighting back. Not only are authorities making arrests, but also spam-filtering software firms like MailFrontier are starting to address the problem. MailFrontier recently updated its Matador ($30) spam filter to identify phisher spam and automatically report it to the FTC.

On another front, Amazon.com, EBay, Microsoft, and security firm Cyveillance have teamed to fight phisher fraud. They recently formed a working group, the Information Technology Association of America, to seek technology solutions to fight phisher fraud.

Despite publicity about phisher scams, Internet users still fall for the cons, says Todd Bransford, vice president of product marketing at Cyveillance. His company identifies and gathers data on phisher scams and bogus sites, and supplies the information to MailFrontier.

Phisher victims are among those who lost $5 billion to identity theft crimes in 2002, according to the Federal Trade Commission. Bransford says phisher scams are currently the fastest growing form of fraud on the Internet.

The only ones more concerned about phisher scams than worried Web surfers are the businesses being misrepresented.

"Nothing can undermine the trust of consumers and businesses more than sites that con customers out of their account information," says Hans Peter Brondmo, senior vice president at Digital Impact, a permission-based e-mail marketing firm.

The ability to spoof messages is the Achilles heel of e-mail, Brondmo says. As a member of the Network Advertising Initiative, an e-mail marketing trade association, Brondmo’s Digital Impact and other members like AdForce and DoubleClick are working to make it possible for consumers to verify the source of e-mail.

"If you can shine a bright light on all senders of e-mail it becomes a lot harder for scammers to hide in the dark corners of the Internet," Brondmo says. Advertisers with the NAI and businesses represented by the ITAA have a vested interest in making sure consumers don’t lose faith and begin disregarding even legitimate pitches.

No standards yet exist for recipients to authenticate e-mail. Tools are available, such as encryption and public key infrastructure technologies that support digital signatures. But these aren’t practical for sending bulk e-mail, and most people lack the patience to use them. What’s more, any widespread use of authentication is likely to draw close scrutiny from free speech and privacy rights activists.

With phisher scams still presenting a genuine threat to consumers, the only defense is advice: Don’t bite when someone goes phishing.

Apple Unleashes Panther

The wait is over for the relatively small, but faithful legion of Mac users, as Apple delivers the next generation of its OS X software to shelves during the "Night of the Panther."

Among some 150 new features being touted by Apple are a Finder for one-click access to a user's favorite files and folders, the Expos interface for viewing desktop windows and iChat AV, which enables video conferencing.

The underlying changes to Panther and Panther Server indicate an effort to reach the enterprise sector, said Jim Dalrymple, editor online for MacWorld and MacCentral. "Previously, there had been reasons not to put a Mac in a mixed environment. The ability to communicate with other platforms is a compelling reason for businesses to adopt this platform," he told NewsFactor.

In launching Panther almost simultaneously with the G5 computer, "Apple has finally put the whole hardware and software package together," Dalrymple said.

Panther does improve on Jaguar's integration with Windows networks, making it more attractive for enterprise customers, said Mark Anbinder, a contributing editor at TidBITS, the Apple newsletter for Apple fans.

Panther works well alongside Windows machines, he told NewsFactor, adding that Macs, with a more secure firewall, are getting a second look from businesses and consumers increasingly concerned about the vulnerabilities of Windows. Anbinder pointed out that OS X Panther offers the FileVault security application that lets users encrypt data on the hard drive.

Expos is a significant addition to the Apple OS, said Anbinder. It lets users - with a single click - shrink all Windows on the desktop into thumbnails to easily organize and access the files they need. "It requires a little more horsepower, but is a visible difference in the way Apple computers work," he said.

The iChat videoconferencing application may well draw a new audience to Apple - professionals looking for multimedia communications and videoconferencing.

The new features of Panther are compelling, acknowledges Yankee Group analyst Laura DiDio. Still, "if Apple is to do more than make machines for a niche market, it has to start turning heads in corporate IT departments," she told NewsFactor.

To that end, The Panther server OS has a new server-admin tool to set up and manage open-source software, such as Apache or Tomcat. And it allows Windows clients to plug into the network. Panther server software runs on Apple's XServe rack-mount server hardware.

Panther carries a suggested retail price of US$129, with a "Family Pack," single-residence, five-user license for $199. Mac OS X Server version 10.3 Panther will sell for $499 for a 10-client edition and $999 for an unlimited-client edition.

While the new OS is optimized for Apple's hot new G5 hardware, Anbinder said Panther runs quite smoothly on older G3 and G4 computers as well.

Always popular in the graphic arts, media and educational markets, Apple has lagged in the enterprise space. DiDio contends that will not change any time soon. "To compete for the attention of I.T. managers, Apple is going to have to ship something really revolutionary," she said. "And as good as I think the new Panther offerings are, I think these are evolutionary."

Microsoft Launches Revamped Office Software

Microsoft Corp. offered a new version of its Office software on Tuesday, betting its spam fighting capabilities and enhanced features will recharge growth for its second largest cash cow.

Now in its 11th version since launching more than a decade ago, the world's largest software maker's Office collection of applications has evolved into a tool that lets business workers collaborate on documents, research information from applications and manage data over the Web, Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates (news - web sites) said at a launch event in New York.

"There's no doubt that first version was a little clunky, a little bit too much of a technologist's dream... But we listened hard. People asked us to change it and we drove it forward," Gates told an audience of analysts, journalists and business partners at the event.

However, META Group analyst Kurt Schlegel said that while the features hold promise, the complexity of the software could make it difficult for businesses to test and put Office to use before Windows undergoes its next overhaul in 2005 or 2006.

"It's a definite risk" Schlegel said.

Word for writing documents, Excel for spreadsheet calculations, PowerPoint for presentations, and Outlook for e-mail and calendar management still make up the basic applications in the new Office, which will retail at between $150 and $500 per copy.

Microsoft is spending $500 million to sell Office 2003 to individuals and businesses, of which $150 million will be used to advertise Office aggressively in print, radio and television.

With the launch of Office 2003 Microsoft is also targeting small and medium-sized businesses with a separate edition designed for companies with less than 1,000 employees.

"It really is a missed opportunity," Gates told 200 local business leaders at Microsoft's new 100,000 square foot Manhattan office. "On average small businesses are getting less of the advantages of technology than large businesses."

"Teams of people are where I think the (new Office) really shines," Chief Executive Steve Ballmer told corporate and government technology buyers at a Gartner conference in Orlando, Florida.

The challenge for Microsoft and the companies that sell its software will be to convince users to upgrade from previous versions, which generate $9 billion in annual revenue, nearly a third of Microsoft's total.

"The previous versions of Office are our number one competitor," Jeff Raikes, head the Microsoft division that includes Office, said in an interview before the announcement.

Also included in the new version is support for XML, or Extensible Markup Language, a method for converting computer documents into publishable Web

pages that are structured to be shared across computers, networks and other software programs.

Office's XML capabilities would allow companies to collect data from Excel spreadsheets and through custom-made forms on a new Office product called InfoPath.

Ted Schadler, an analyst with Forrester Research Inc., said Office 2003's ability to feed data into corporate systems, as well as its ability to let multiple users communicate and work on business documents together, will convince customers to upgrade.

"With Office System, Microsoft can tap into other corporate budgets earmarked to harness information and make workers more productive," Schadler wrote in a report issued on Tuesday.

At the same time, other analysts have noted that such complexity, developed by more than 2,000 software engineers, might make companies reluctant to upgrade until the new version is tested for security and reliability.

Moreover, Office's days could be numbered, since Microsoft is planning to shift to a new version of its Windows operating system in two to three years, which could require another overhaul of Office.

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